

Leeds Church Institute.

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THE
BELIEVER'S COMPLETENESS IN CHRIST.

A SERMON,

BY THE

REV. SAMUEL MINTON, M.A.

“YE ARE COMPLETE IN HIM.”—COL. ii. 10.

THESE words call our attention at once to the Christian's grand privilege ; his life, his happiness, his security, his glory. In the latter part of this epistle, he is told how he *ought* to stand before men : here he is shown how he *does* stand before God—*complete in Christ*. And, as nothing is more calculated to make him value his privilege of union with Christ than a close comparison of his own heart and life with the perfect standard of excellence that is set him to follow, so there is nothing more likely to encourage him in aiming at that standard than a lively sense of his exalted privileges.

“The law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ,” Gal. iii. 24. The Spirit makes us see what the perfect law of God requires from us, how far we fall short of it, what weak, helpless creatures we are in ourselves, to do anything good ; and this feeling of our own guilt, and helplessness, and ruin, sends us to Christ for pardon, and strength, and salvation. “No man can come to me,” said Jesus, “except the Father which hath sent me draw him,” John vi. 44. And it is in this way the Father draws sinners to Christ ; by sending His Spirit, to convince them of sin, to make them feel weary and heavy laden with the burden of their transgressions, to show them the disease and danger of their souls, that they may be glad to go to the great Physician to be healed.

And when they have been to Him, and He has restored their souls ; when He has assured them that all their

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sins are blotted out, that their whole debt is paid, the punishment of all their iniquities borne, and an entrance purchased for them into the kingdom of heaven ; when He has shown them their happiness and glory, to be members of His body, part of His bride ; their security resting not on their own faithfulness, which would be no better foundation than a quicksand, but on *His* faithfulness, *His* unchangeableness—"Because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 19 ; when He has said unto them, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke xii. 32, and *therefore* "ye shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck you out of my hand," John x. 28 ; when He has thus set their feet upon the rock, given them spiritual life, and health, and energy, —what are they to do then ? Are they to sit idle ? Are they to do nothing, because Christ has already done everything ? No ! it is the very knowledge of this blessed truth, the very feeling that they are saved freely through Christ's blood, without anything of their own, that will give them fresh spirit and courage for the battle, because sure of victory. The more certain a soldier is of victory, the more courageously he will fight. And he, who has the clearest view of the freeness and fulness of Christ's salvation, of the perfect safety and completeness of every one of His people, and of his own personal interest in the redemption purchased on the cross ; he, in fact, who knows that he is a saved man, and that all the powers of earth and hell united can never pluck him out of his Saviour's hand ; he it is who will love his Saviour the most ardently, and fight for Him the most bravely. And if any one finds that a confidence in God's mercy through Christ makes him careless in his own walk, or indifferent to the salvation of others, he may rest assured that he is under a fatal delusion.

Nor has he less cause to suspect his state, if, with this feeling of security in the faithfulness of Christ, he has not likewise a feeling of worthlessness and helplessness in himself. These two things should always go together. "Rejoice with trembling," Psalm ii. 11 ; trembling in the consciousness of your own weakness and instability,

rejoicing in the consciousness of your strength and perfect security in Christ. You cannot rejoice too much, so long as this self-distrust and self-aborrence accompanies it. The more sail you can set, the better your ship will catch the breeze, and the faster she will fly towards the haven. But then there must be ballast, to keep her steady. "Rejoice evermore," 1 Thess. v. 16, writes St. Paul; "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice," Phil. iv. 4—11. Rejoice! says the weak believer. How can I rejoice? With all I know of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of my own heart, of the corruption that is continually struggling within, and the temptations I am ever exposed to from without; with all I know of my infirmities, shortcomings, negligences, and ignorances—how can I rejoice? Why, by seeing that "ye are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power," even Jesus Christ. "Rejoice *in the Lord.*" Look at the Son of God, your glorified Head; and remember that you are now complete *in* Him, that you will soon be completely *like* Him.

How is it that so many true Christians go mourning and halting on their road to Zion? It is because they know so little of their completeness in Christ. They *believe* in Him, and are *saved* by Him. They have faith, but not the "full assurance of faith," Heb. x. 22. The weakest believer is as sure of reaching heaven as the strongest; because none but the Spirit of God could have put even that grain of faith into his heart; and we are told, "that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," Phil. i. 6. But though he *is* safe, he cannot *feel* that he is safe; and so, as an old writer says, he goes all the way with a thorn in his foot. He reaches Zion, infallibly; but with neither the comfort to himself, nor the usefulness to others, with which the strong believer performs his journey. Instead of having one eye turned inward and the other upward, he keeps both fixed within; and so becomes dispirited and sickened by perpetual disappointment, because he can find nothing there to give him comfort or satisfaction. We should look inward, no doubt, to be kept humble and

watchful ; but we must look upward to be strengthened, animated, and comforted.

“Ye are complete in Him.” Here is an inexhaustible fountain of living water, from which every believer may draw out by faith support and encouragement exactly suited to his own case. Wherever he feels his own incompleteness, in that point will the view of his completeness in Christ give him the greatest comfort. Ask the Spirit of God to take this truth, to make you understand it, believe it, and feel it ; and then you will be able to “rejoice in the Lord always.” Poverty may come—persecution may come—dangers, difficulties, sorrows, and distresses may pour upon you—temptations may assail—corruptions may struggle—the enemy may come in like a flood—but in the midst of it all you will be able to “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,” 1 Peter i. 8. The very knowledge of your own deformity, which is now your constant thorn, will serve to increase your joy, in remembering how entirely it is covered by the wedding robe of Christ’s righteousness.

To see it in the clearest light, consider first your natural completeness in Adam.

All the sons and daughters of Adam were in him, when he fell. He was placed in the garden of Eden on trial, as the representative of the whole human race. Their destiny was staked on his conduct. They were to stand or fall with him. He fell : and “in Adam,” we are told, “all die,” 1 Cor. xv. 22. The world was ruined. For as his family, generation after generation, swelled out, their father’s curse rested on them still. The blood too was tainted. Each one of them inherited his father’s fallen nature ; “for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? Not one,” Job. xiv. 4. This may be a hard saying to our carnal minds. But we know that God has a right to do what He will with His own, that He will not submit to be questioned by His creatures, and that even we shall one day be able to reconcile all the evil existing in the world, with the infinite holiness, justice, and love of Him who permits it.

It pleased God to stake the fortune of the world on

one man ; and he lost it. But God so loved the world, that He would not leave it in this state of ruin. It pleased Him to stake it again on another man ; and He won back what the first man lost. And why so ? why did one man fall and the other stand ? St. Paul tells us, "The first man is of the earth, earthy ;" *only* a man ; though created without sin, yet a mere creature, weak in himself, and therefore unable to stand. "The second man is the Lord from heaven," 1 Cor. xv. 47. He was God in human form, "God manifest in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16. Therefore He stood. And as all the family of Adam died in him, so all the family of God live in Christ. Believer, you belong to both families ; to the one by birth, to the other by marriage. You were born into Adam's family ; heir to all his guilt, and misery, and corruption, and death ; you were received into the family of God through being married to His Son Jesus Christ by faith (for the ransomed church is "the Lamb's bride") ; and by being thus united to Him, not by anything you can do yourself, or for anything you deserve, but simply by your union with Him, you become heir to "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," to life, and glory, and honour, and happiness, and immortality. You are complete in Adam, and complete in Christ. In Adam completely fallen—in Christ completely saved. In Adam completely sinful—in Christ completely righteous. The knowledge of the one should humble you—the knowledge of the other should encourage you. And the reason you are so fearful and dispirited is, that you don't see your completeness in Christ as clearly as you do your completeness in Adam. There is an over-weight of ballast in your vessel, and but little sail set ; so she drags heavily through the water.

Now try to remember, that the one is as real a thing as the other. Don't you find your inheritance from Adam a real thing ? Is it not a stubborn fact, that stares you in the face every hour of the day ? There is no danger of your forgetting that you are a son of Adam ; you are reminded of it too often, by the workings of sin within, and the stings of suffering without. Poverty, sickness,

disease, or pain ; the unkindness of friends, or the malice of enemies ; the gnawings of fear, or the bitterness of disappointment ; the risings of corruption, of pride, malice, envy, revenge, discontent, selfishness, worldly-mindedness, unbelief, or impatience—who is free from some or more of these for a day ? No ; they are constant monitors, to remind you that you are complete in Adam, a child of man, with man's nature, and that nature just as fallen and corrupt as when our first father begat a son in his own likeness nearly six thousand years ago. But when you feel all this, remember that you are possessed of another nature, and that your new nature is as complete in Christ, as your old one is complete in Adam. Every true believer, however weak his faith, or however small his attainments, has two perfect natures within him ; one perfectly bad, which he was born with at his first birth from his mother's womb—the other perfectly good, which was given him at his second birth, when he was regenerated or born again of the Holy Spirit. The old nature never becomes any better ; it has not to be improved, but to be mortified—to be crucified ; the new nature *can* be no better, because it was perfect from the first, being “the divine nature.” Growth in grace is the new nature getting more and more the mastery over the old one, and keeping it down. Before conversion there is no struggle at all ; there is no one to fight with ; there is only one man in the field ; the evil principle lies quiet, because it has all its own way. But the moment divine grace drops a new principle into the sinner's heart, the contest begins directly : two inveterate enemies are placed face to face, and there is an unceasing struggle kept up between them, until death puts an end to it, by annihilating the old man of sin. Then the new man rises up perfect in its Creator's likeness, and is received into the bosom of its God.

2. Endeavour, then, to realize this your completeness in Christ. You are as complete in Him now, as ever you will be. The only difference is, that when you enter heaven, you will be freed from that hateful companion, the old man of sin, which you cannot now get rid of, and which defiles your every action. In the eyes of others,

you should stand higher in holiness every year you live ; in your own eyes, you should stand lower, and be more self-abased ; but in the eye of God, your standing now is just what it was when first He wrote your name in the book of life, just what it will be a thousand years to come. He chose you in Christ out of the world from everlasting ; He actually united you to Christ, when His Spirit first led you in penitence and contrition to the foot of the cross ; He looks upon you as in Christ now ; and so will He look upon you neither more nor less throughout eternity. You may *feel* more closely united to Christ at one time than another ; but you never *are* so. He is no half Saviour. There is no half salvation, made out partly of His merits, and partly of your own. It is *in* Christ, or *out* of Christ ; complete in Him, or having nothing to do with Him. You cannot be half in Christ, and half out of Him. You cannot be in Him at one time, and out of Him at another. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me ; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand," John x. 28, 29. The union once formed is complete and eternal.

You are afraid of your faith failing : and well you might be, if it depended on yourself. But what did Jesus say to Peter ? "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat ; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," Luke xxii. 31. There it is. See how complete you are in Him. Jesus has not only borne the punishment of all your sins, past, present, and to come, worked out for you a perfect righteousness, clothed in which you may stand spotless before God, sent His Spirit to change your heart, and given you the power by faith to lay hold of His hand ; but He has also prayed for you, that you may never be allowed to let go your hold. It would be very incomplete without this. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Here is your security. Christ's prayer must be answered, for "the Father heareth him always." So a believer in Christ

is Christ's for ever. And he may be "persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom. viii. 38, 39. Is it not complete ?

And should there be any contrite spirits here, distressed with doubts as to whether *they* have any interest in this glorious privilege, let them rest assured that not one penitent ever perished at the foot of the cross. It was the lost that Jesus came to seek and to save, Matt. xviii. 11. It was sinners, not the righteous, whom He called to repentance, Matt. ix. 13. It is the sick, not the whole, that have need of a physician, Matt. ix. 12. It is the weary and heavy-laden that are bid come to Him for rest, Matt. xi. 28. It is the thirsty that are invited to drink of the living water, Isaiah lv. 1, John vii. 57. It is the weepers and mourners to whom comfort is promised, Matt. v. 4. It is the poor in spirit who inherit the kingdom, Matt. v. 3. It is the broken, contrite heart, that God will not despise, Psalm li. 17. It is the smoking flax He will not quench ; the bruised reed He will not break, Isaiah xliii. 3. It is the lowly spirit, trembling at His word, that He looks upon with favour, Isaiah lxvi, 2. It is they who humble themselves under His mighty hand that He will exalt in due time, 1 Peter v. 6. It is the spiritually wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked (Rev. iii. 17), who have the least cause to doubt, and the greatest cause to rejoice in, the blessed assurance—"Ye are complete in Him."



